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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000727

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: THE OPPOSITION KMT REACTS TO PRESIDENT CHEN

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David Keegan,  
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The opposition Kuomintang (KMT) plans to initiate a recall motion against President Chen, not with any expectation of success, but to highlight Chen's perceived failings and to counter his repeated attacks on party Chairman Ma Ying-jeou. The KMT believes that Chen will fail to amend the constitution or otherwise change the institutional status quo. They fear he could succeed in changing the popular mentality in Taiwan, expanding the "market" for independence and undermining support for the KMT. This will make it more difficult for the KMT to persuade voters that Taiwan needs better relations with the PRC for its own economy to prosper. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The KMT remains optimistic about the party's chances in the 2008 presidential election because the people want change, but President Chen's aggressive pushing of his political agenda is making the situation more difficult for the KMT and its chairman, Ma Ying-jeou, KMT Secretary General Chan Chuen-po told ADIR during a dinner on March 3, which also included other KMT leaders and AIT poloffs. While the KMT would like to compete with the DPP over economic and related issues, which are the KMT's strong suit, Chen wants to compete on the unification-independence issue, a more difficult issue for the KMT.

¶3. (C) With his move to "cease the functioning" of the National Unification Council (NUC) and "cease the application" of the National Unification Guidelines (NUG) and other political initiatives, Chen is trying to provoke angry reactions from the KMT and the PRC to help himself politically, KMT Director of Mainland Affairs Chang Jung-kung suggested. Chen wants people to believe that the PRC is the enemy, which increases the market in Taiwan for independence and reduces the market for the KMT. If Chen succeeds in making the Taiwan people believe the PRC is an enemy, Chang added, the KMT will have trouble implementing its policies even if the party returns to power. In addition, if Chen damages relations with the PRC, that could also hurt Taiwan because Taiwan needs the PRC for its own economy to prosper.

¶4. (C) Chang Jung-kung predicted that, following his manipulation of the NUC/NUG, Chen will turn next to plans for a "new constitution," which Chang said can refer either to a

revised or an entirely new constitution. Chang noted that in speeches since last October Chen has been defining the national territory as the measured area of Taiwan, which raises questions about whether Chen is heading toward "de jure Taiwan independence." Chen has also taken to using the name "ROC Taiwan" rather than "ROC" alone when he has to refer to the formal national name, though even in formal speeches he uses the name "Taiwan" much more often.

15. (C) The goal of the planned KMT effort to recall Chen Shui-bian is not actually to remove the president but to highlight his failings and cause him to lose face, Chang and the other KMT leaders explained. Because Chen has been attacking Ma every couple of days, they explained, Ma has to attack Chen to show party supporters that he is not weak, to preempt People First Party (PFP) efforts to claim leadership of the anti-Chen movement, and to weaken the president. Ma has already told the public that the pan-Blue does not have enough votes in the Legislative Yuan (LY) to pass the recall motion, and therefore he will not suffer any fallout from the motion's expected failure. The KMT leaders were not sure how the recall effort will play out or how long it will run. They stressed they do not want Chen to testify in person because they fear he could turn the tables on his pan-Blue accusers and rally his Green supporters.

16. (C) Chan defended the recent KMT ad in the Green "Liberty Times" that stated independence is an option for Taiwan, saying that the message in the ad is consistent with KMT policy. Chan explained that the KMT had placed the ad to counteract articles in this and other Green newspapers that regularly distort KMT policies. The ad targets light green voters who read the Liberty Times because the KMT believes Ma can attract this group as he did when he ran for reelection

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in the 2002 Taipei mayoral contest.

Note  
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17. (SBU) The other KMT participants in the dinner meeting were Deputy Secretary General Chang Che-shen, who is also Chairman of the Central Investment Holding Co., Ltd.; Deputy Secretary General and Legislator Wu Jin-lin; KMT-affiliated

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National Policy Foundation President Tsai Hsung-hsiung; and  
KMT Organization and Development Committee Chairman and  
Professor Liao Feng-te.

Comment  
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18. (C) KMT leaders have slipped into an all too familiar defensive mode following Chen's launching of the NUC/NUG issue. They are reacting both to pressure from party supporters and KMT LY members as well as to Chen's moves. Subjected to President Chen's hard-ball politics since January 1, the KMT and its leaders have lost control of the political agenda and have also lost a certain measure of the confidence and policy coherence they had coming out of their major victory in the December local elections. They now seem more afraid of Chen, uncertain and divided on important policy issues, and unclear even on how to ensure that their counterattacks on Chen will help the KMT rather than backfire.

KEEGAN